

YOUR HEALTH

New Preventive Services From Medicare

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(NAPS)—Living a healthy lifestyle has long been recognized as the best way to stop health problems before they start. Nowadays, a healthy lifestyle means not only eating right and staying active, but using preventive services that can find potential health problems early, when treatment works best.

Medicare now pays for several new preventive services to keep all people with Medicare healthy.

People with Medicare can take advantage of three important new benefits right now: a one-time “Welcome to Medicare” physical exam (for people new to Medicare), cardiovascular screening, and diabetes screening. And starting January 1, 2006, Medicare prescription drug coverage will be available to all people with Medicare, and will include coverage for certain treatments to help smokers kick the habit.

One-Time “Welcome To Medicare” Physical Exam

If your Medicare Part B coverage begins on or after January 1, 2005, Medicare will cover a one-time preventive physical exam within the first six months you have Part B. The exam includes a review of your health, counseling about preventive services you may need, and referrals for other care if you need it.

Cardiovascular Screening

Medicare covers cardiovascular screenings that check your cholesterol and other blood fat (lipid) levels. High levels of cholesterol can increase your risk for heart

disease and stroke. These screenings will tell if you have high cholesterol. Medicare covers these tests every five years.

Diabetes Screening

Diabetes is a medical condition in which your body doesn’t make enough insulin or has a reduced response to insulin. Because your body needs insulin to use sugar properly, people with diabetes have blood sugar levels that are too high. Talk with your doctor to see if this screening is right for you and how often it’s covered by Medicare.

Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage

Medicare prescription drug coverage begins on January 1, 2006 and will be available to all people with Medicare. Medicare prescription drug plans will cover both generic and brand-name drugs, and can help you realize substantial savings on your out-of-pocket drug costs. Watch for Medicare to mail you more information in the fall on how you can get this important coverage.

Smoking Cessation Treatments

Medicare’s upcoming prescription drug coverage will also cover doctor-prescribed smoking cessation treatments for people who have smoking-related diseases, or who are taking medicines that may be affected by tobacco use.

For more information about these benefits and other Medicare preventive services, get a free copy of the *Guide to Medicare’s Preventive Services* at www.medicare.gov. Select “Search Tools” at the top of the page. Or, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

Healthy Ideas

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